



## RECORDS MANAGEMENT ADVICE

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### Basics of Records Management: **Retaining Records in Electronic Format**

Purpose: Provide guidance to state government agencies on the retention of electronic records in electronic format.

#### **How should electronic records be retained?**

Electronic records (emails, databases, electronic calendars, etc.) should remain in their original formats whenever possible. **This means that electronic records should not be printed out for retention purposes.** Although it may seem adequate retention to print out electronic records, key information such as “metadata” will be missing. **The metadata is the information that lets you search, retrieve, access, manage and preserve your records.**

#### **Important Principles to Remember**

The International Standard (ISO) for Records Management gives characteristics of a record regardless of its form including: **authenticity, reliability, integrity, and usability.** This means that records should accurately reflect the communications and actions of the agency, supporting the needs of agency business and used for accountability purposes. Aside from the actual content, records should also contain the metadata. The content, context and structure of records give them meaning and make them usable. Metadata – the how, when, where and who of the record - helps preserve these characteristics to ensure ongoing access. (See also Maine Title 16, §456-A: Admissibility of electronic records)

#### **Can electronic records be migrated?**

**Yes** – To preserve electronic records, especially those with long term retentions or those which are archival, it may be necessary to migrate records to avoid obsolescence. It is important to ensure that any data migration to another electronic format preserves the necessary metadata needed to prove the record’s authenticity. Remember these principles: authenticity, reliability, integrity, and usability.

(NOTE: The Maine State Archives has services for digital to microfilm conversion for State Agencies.)

**Additional advice regarding the management of public records is available at**  
<http://www.maine.gov/sos/arc/records/state/statetraining.html>

*“The right record, to the right person, at the right time, at the lowest possible cost”*